

“MARVELLOUS LOVINGKINDNESS”
NO. 2702

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, NOVEMBER 25, 1900
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON
ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 20, 1881

“Shew thy marvellous lovingkindness.”
Psalm 17:7

THE Lord’s people, in the time of their trouble, know where to go for comfort and relief. Being taught of God, they do not hew out to themselves broken cisterns which can hold no water, but they turn to the ever flowing fountain, they go to the wellhead—even to God Himself, and there they cast themselves down, and drink to the full. David, when he wrote this psalm, was evidently in very great distress, and therefore he says, “I have called upon thee, for thou wilt hear me, O God: incline thine ear unto me, and hear my speech.” What he wanted was his God, as Dr. Watts expresses it—

*“In darkest shades if He appear,
My dawning is begun;
He is my soul’s sweet morning star,
And He my rising sun.”*

Believers draw comfort both from God’s ordinary and extraordinary dealings with them, for they regard God’s lovingkindness as being both an ordinary and an extraordinary thing. I have heard of a good sister who, when a friend narrated to her some very gracious dealing of God, was asked the question, “Is it not very wonderful?” and she replied, “No, it is not wonderful, for it is just like Him.” Begging her pardon, and admitting the great truth that she meant to convey, I think it is still more wonderful that it should be “just like Him.”

The wonder of extraordinary love is that God should make it such an ordinary thing, that He should give to us “marvellous lovingkindness,” and yet should give it so often that it becomes a daily blessing, and yet remains marvelous still. The marvels of men, after you have seen them a few times, cease to excite any wonder. I suppose there is scarcely a building, however costly its materials, and however rare its architecture, as to which, sooner or later, you will not feel that you have seen enough of it.

But God’s wonderful works never pall upon you. You could gaze upon Mont Blanc, or you could stand and watch Niagara, yet never feel that you had exhausted all its marvels. And everyone knows how the ocean is never twice alike. They who live close to it, and look upon it every hour of the day, still see God’s wonders in the deep.

That God should bless us every day is a theme for our comfort. God’s ordinary ways charm us. The verse before our text says, “‘I have called upon thee, for thou wilt hear me, O God.’ I know You will, for the blessing that I am about to ask from You is a thing that I have been accustomed to receive from You. I know You will hear me, for You have heard me in the past, it is a habit of Yours to listen to my supplications, and to grant my requests.”

I hope we can argue in a similar fashion, yet at the same time, God’s people draw equal comfort from the extraordinary character of the mercies He bestows upon them. They appeal to Him to show them His “marvellous lovingkindness,” to let them see the wonderful side of it as well as the common side of it, to let them behold His miracles of mercy, His extravagances of love, His superfluities of kindness—I scarcely know what words to use when talking of what the apostle Paul calls “the riches of

his grace, wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence,” “the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.”

I want on this occasion, to dwell upon the extraordinary side of God’s lovingkindness, and using our text as a prayer, to say to the Lord in the language of David, “Shew thy marvellous lovingkindness.” Sometimes a man is brought into such a condition that he feels that, if God does not do something quite out of the common order of things, he will assuredly perish. He has now come to such a pass that, if some extraordinary grace is not displayed towards him, all is over with him.

Well, now, such a brother may think that God will not give this extraordinary grace to him, he may be troubled at the idea that some marvelous thing is needed. It is to meet that suggestion of unbelief that I am going to address you now.

I. And my first remark is, that ALL THE LOVINGKINDNESS OF GOD IS MARVELOUS.

The least mercy from God is a miracle. That God does not crush our sinful race is a surprising mercy. That you and I should have been spared to live—even though it were only to exist in direst poverty, or in sorest sickness—that we should have been spared at all, after what we have been, and after what we have done, is a very marvelous thing. The explanation of the marvel is given in the book of Malachi, “I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.” If God had possessed such a short temper as men often have, He would have made short work with us all, but He is gracious and longsuffering, and therefore he is very patient with us.

The very least mercy that we ever receive from God is a very wonderful thing, but when we think of all that is meant by this blessed word “lovingkindness”—which is a compound of all sorts of sweetness, a mixture of fragrances to make up one absolutely perfect perfume—when we take that word “lovingkindness,” and think over its meaning, we shall see that it is a marvelous thing indeed that it describes.

For first, it is *marvelous for its antiquity*. To think that God should have had lovingkindness towards men or ever the earth was, that there should have been a covenant of election—a plan of redemption—a scheme of atonement—that there should have been eternal thoughts of love in the mind of God towards such a strange being as man, is indeed marvelous. “What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that you visit him?” Read these words with tears in your eyes, “I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee,” and when you know that this passage refers to you, tell me if it is not “marvellous lovingkindness.”

God’s mind is occupied with thoughts concerning things that are infinitely greater than the destiny of anyone of us, or of all of us put together, yet He was pleased to think of us in love from all eternity, and to write our names upon His hands and upon His heart, and to keep the remembrance of us perpetually before Him, for His “delights were with the sons of men.” This antiquity makes it to be indeed “marvellous lovingkindness.”

Next, think of *its discriminating character*, that God’s lovingkindness should have come to the poorest, to the most illiterate, the most obscure, and often to the guiltiest of our race. Remember what Paul wrote about this matter, “not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not manly noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence.” Dr. Watts expresses the same thought in his verses—

*“When the Eternal bows the skies
To visit earthly things,
With scorn divine He turns His eyes
From towers of haughty kings.*

*He bids His awful chariot roll
Far downward from the skies,*

*To visit every humble soul,
With pleasure in His eyes.”*

God’s choice is marvelous. I know of no better word to apply to His lovingkindness to His chosen than that which is applied in the text, “Thy marvellous lovingkindness.”

*“What was there in you that could merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight?
‘Twas even so, Father,’ you ever must sing,
‘Because it seem’d good in Thy sight.’”*

There is no other explanation of this wondrous mercy, this “marvellous lovingkindness,” than the poet gives—

*“His love, from eternity fix’d upon you,
Broke forth and discover’d its flame,
When each with the cords of His kindness He drew,
And brought you to love His great name.”*

So, beloved, think over the antiquity of God’s lovingkindness, and then of the discriminating character of it, and surely you will be full of adoring wonder.

After that, think also of *the self-sacrificing nature of His lovingkindness*—that, when God had set His heart on man, and had chosen His people before the foundation of the world, then He should give—what? Himself. Ay, nothing short of that—that He should not only give us this world, and His providence, and all its blessings, and the world to come, and all its glories, but that in order to our possession of these things, He should give His own Son to die for us.

Well might the apostle John write, “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” It was not that Christ died for us when we were righteous, “for scarcely for a righteous man will one die,” “but God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” “When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.”

Isaiah had long before explained the mystery, “It pleased the LORD to bruise him: he hath put him to grief.” You who love your children, to lose one of whom would be worse than to die, can realize a little of what must have been the Father’s love to you in giving up His only begotten Son that you might live through Him. Dwell on this great truth, dear friends, meditate on it, and ask the Holy Spirit to lead you into its heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths, for these lips cannot fully speak of its wonders.

As you think over the Lord’s ancient lovingkindnesses which were ever of old, His distinguishing love towards His redeemed, and His self-sacrificing love in giving up His Only Begotten, you will be obliged to say, “It is marvellous lovingkindness; it is marvellous lovingkindness indeed.”

Then go on to think of *the marvelous constancy of it*. That one should begin to love another, is not so very wonderful, but that love, after it has been despised and ill-required, should still continue—that the sweet love of Christ should not long ago have curdled into jealousy, and from jealousy have soured into indignation, is an extraordinary thing.

He loved us, brothers and sisters, when we did not even know Him, and yet hated the Unknown; when we did not even dimly understand His love to us, and peradventure even ridiculed it, or at least neglected it. Yet He kept on loving us until He loved us into loving Him. But even since then, what has been our character? Are you satisfied with what you have been towards the Well-beloved? Are you content with your conduct towards the Bridegroom of your souls? I think that you are not, and yet, notwithstanding your lukewarmness, your backsliding, your dishonoring of His name, your unbelief, your pride, your love of others, He still loves you, and even now, if you are not enjoying fellowship with

Him, He has not gone away from you, for His word still is, “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock.” He loves, He loves on, and He loves still.

Many waters cannot quench His love, neither can the floods drown it. It is indeed “marvellous lovingkindness.” Can you think of a better adjective than that? I cannot, yet I am conscious that even it does not fully express the miraculous character of this all-enduring love which will not take our “No” for an answer, but still says, “Yes—‘yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD.’” Oh, this wonderful, this matchless, this unparalleled, this inconceivable, this infinite love! No human language can adequately describe it, so let us sit still, and marvel at that which we cannot even understand.

There is much in God’s lovingkindness to be marveled at *in its strange ingenuity*. I might keep on with this topic forever, applying one word and another to it, yet I should never have shown you even the tithe of its wonders, for it is an altogether inexhaustible theme. But it is wonderful how God deals with us with such a sacred ingenuity of tenderness. He seems to be always thinking of something for our good, while we on our part, appear to be always testing His love in one way or another.

Some fresh want is discovered only to receive a new supply of grace. Some fresh sin breaks out only to be blotted out with the ever pardoning blood of Jesus. We get into fresh difficulties only to receive fresh aid. The further I go on my way to heaven, the more I do admire the road as well as wonder at the goal to which that road shall bring me. “O world of wonders!” said John Bunyan, “I can say no less.”

They tell us nowadays, that the world is worn-out, and that there is no joy in life, and nothing fresh to afford delight. Ah, me! they talk of the attractions of fiction and of the playwright’s art and I know not what besides. They must needs travel all round the world to get a new sensation, and many a man, today, is like the Emperor Tiberius, who offered large sums of money to anyone who could invent a new pleasure, meaning, alas, too often, a new vice, or a new way of practicing it.

But staying at home with Christ has more wonders in it than gadding abroad with all the wisest of the world. There is more to marvel at in half an inch of the way to heaven than there is in a thousand leagues of the ordinary pathway of unbelieving men. They call their joys by the name of “life,” and say that they must “see life,” but the apostle John tells us that “he that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life,” that is to say, he is dead.

Death has its varieties of worms and rottenness, there are charnel houses *and* charnel houses, various processes and methods of corruption, and no doubt there is a science that men may learn in the cemetery, and call it life, if they like, but oh! if they did but once see Christ upon the cross, they would learn that they had been blind till then.

If they did but know His lovingkindness, they would rejoice in it in the sick chamber, in the long weary night watches, when every bone prevented sleep, they would even recognize it in the arrows of death that smote wife, and child, and brother. They would see it, not only in the table loaded for the supply of hunger, and in the garments furnished against the cold, and in every common blessing of providence, but they would also see it in every despondency, in every deficiency, in every cross, and every loss, and seeing it, they would keep on saying, “It is all for the best, it is all better than the best could have been if it had been left to me. It is marvelous, it is marvelous lovingkindness.”

I do believe that, when we get to heaven, one of the wonders of the glory land will be to look back upon the road over which we have traveled. It will be marvelous to note the way in which God has led us, and we shall, as our hymn puts it—

*“Sing with rapture and surprise,
His lovingkindness in the skies.”*

I must now leave this part of my subject with you, only again urging you to think over the truth of which I have been speaking, that all God’s lovingkindness to His people is marvelous.

II. Now secondly, THIS LONINGKINDNESS WE SHOULD DESIRE TO SEE.

The psalmist says, “Shew thy marvellous lovingkindness.” And we ought to ask God to let us see it, and that, I think, in four ways.

First, *let me see it with my intellect that I may adore.* Help me, O blessed Spirit, to see and understand what is the lovingkindness of God to my soul! I know that it is written of some that “they shall understand the lovingkindness of the LORD.” Let me be among the number of those truly wise ones. O Lord, make me wise to see the end and design of Your providence as well as the providence itself! Make me wise to perceive how You have prepared Your grace to meet my depravity, how You do adapt Your upholding to the slipperiness of the way, and to the feebleness of my feet. Often shed a ray of light upon some passage in my life which, otherwise, I could not comprehend, and let the light stay there till I begin to see and to know why You did this and why You did that. “Shew thy marvellous lovingkindness.”

I am sure, dear friends, that the lessons of a man’s own life are too often neglected, but there is, in the life of any ordinary child of God—let me pick you out wherever you may be, John, Mary, Thomas—enough to fill you with wonder and admiration of the lovingkindness of the Lord if your mind be but sufficiently illuminated to perceive the hand of God in it, and to see what God purposed by it.

He sometimes uses strange means for producing blessed results. With His sharp axe, He will cut down all our choice trees, as by a whirlwind or a tornado, He will devastate our gardens, and make our fields a desolation, and He will do it all in order that He may drive us away from the City of Destruction, and make us go on pilgrimage to the Celestial City, where the axe can never come, and the leaves will never fade.

In His mysterious dealings with us, the Lord often seems to push us backward that we may go forward, and to deluge us with sorrow that He may immerse us in blessings. That is His way of working wondrously, and if we did but understand it, according to the prayer of the text, “Shew thy marvellous lovingkindness,” we would be full of adoring wonder.

The next meaning I would give to this prayer would be, *Lord, show Thy lovingkindness to my heart, that I may give Thee thanks.* Lord, I know that You have been very good to me, but I pray You to show my heart how good You have been, by letting me see how unworthy I have been of this Your kindness. It is very profitable sometimes, to sit down and rehearse the lovingkindness of God, mingling with it penitential reflections upon your own shortcoming. If you do this, you will at last break out with some such cry as this, “Why is all this mercy shown to me?”

I know a dear brother in Christ, a clergyman, whose name is Curme, he divides it into two syllables, “*Cur me*,” so as to make it mean, “Why me? Why is all this goodness given to me, Lord?” And that is a question which I, too, would gladly ask, “Why me, Lord?”—

*“Why was I made to hear Thy voice,
And enter while there’s room;
When thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?”*

Is this kindness, and this, and this, all meant for me? Can it really be intended for me? Such reflections as these will make me realize more than ever how “marvellous” is God’s “lovingkindness” to me, and will fill my soul with adoring gratitude and thanksgiving.

Then next, we ought to pray the Lord to *show His “marvellous lovingkindness” to our faith that we may again confide in Him.* If He will cause the eye of our faith to see that He has this “marvellous lovingkindness” toward us, we shall be the more ready to rely upon Him in all the straits into which we may yet be brought. Do you believe it, my dear friend? Brother in Christ, do you believe that God loves you? You know how sweet it is to be sure that your child loves you. Though it may well do so, because

of its many obligations to you, yet is it sweet for its warm cheek to touch yours and to hear it say, “Father, I love you.”

But oh! it is far sweeter for God to say, “I love you.” Read the Song of Solomon through, and be not afraid to appropriate the message of that sweet and matchless Canticle. Hear in it the voice of Jesus saying to you, “Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in you.” “Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck.” Such words as those may be sensuous to those who are sensuous, but they are deeply spiritual to those who are spiritual, and oh, the bliss of having such words as those to come from the Christ of God to us! Why sometimes, when our Lord thus speaks to us, we hardly know how to bear our excess of joy.

I would not ask for a better holiday than to have one hour alone with Jesus, to be undisturbed by any earthly care, and just to think of nothing else but the love of God—the love of God to me. Oh, that it now were shed abroad, in all its fullness, in this poor heart of mine! O love divine, what is there that can ever match Your inexpressible sweetness? Truly it is “marvellous lovingkindness.” Again I ask you—Do you believe this? Are you sure you do? Pray God to show it to your faith distinctly and clearly, so that you shall be absolutely sure of it, and practically depend upon it whenever you need it.

One other meaning of the text may be, *show Thy “marvellous lovingkindness” to me now in my experience, that I may rest in Thee*. Let me now at this present moment, O my God, experience something of that lovingkindness in my soul, in whatever condition I may happen to be, that I may be so flooded with the consciousness of it that I may do nothing else but sit in solemn silence before You, and adore You, while beholding the blazing splendor of Your love! I cannot say any more about this part of my theme, but must leave you to fill up the gaps in the sermon. This is not a topic upon which one should venture to speak if he wants to say all that should or could be said upon it.

III. So thirdly, dear friends, I remark that IT SHOULD BE OUR DESIRE—and there are times when it should especially be our desire—TO SEE THIS “MARVELLOUS LOVINGKINDNESS” OF GOD DISPLAYED TO US IN ITS MARVELOUSNESS.

I will make plain to you what I mean directly, and first, we would see it *as pardoning great sin*. I expect we have here in this assembly, at least one whose sin lies very heavy on his conscience. We do not find many such people come out to week evening services, but yet I thank God that they do come here.

Your sin is very great, dear friend. I cannot exaggerate it, because your own sense of its greatness far surpasses any descriptions I could give. You feel that, if God were to pardon you, it would be a marvelous thing. If He were, in one moment, to take all your guilt away, and to send you home completely forgiven, it would be a marvelous thing.

Yes, it would, it would, but I beg you to pray this prayer, “Lord, show forth Thy marvelous lovingkindness in me.” God is constantly doing wonders, then glorify His name by believing that He can work this miracle of mercy for you. Do not be afraid even to sing—

*“Great God of wonders! all Thy ways
Are matchless, God-like, and divine;
But the fair glories of Thy grace
More God-like and unrivalled shine:
Who is a pardoning God like Thee?
Or who has grace so rich and free?”*

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and saved immediately. Trust Him now, and marvelous though it will be to you, I have shown you that God’s lovingkindness is all marvelous, and that the extraordinary is ordinary with God, and that the marvelous is but an everyday thing with Him.

Pray for this “marvelous lovingkindness” to be manifested to you, and you shall have it. One said, “If God ever saves me, He shall never hear the last of it.” You may say the same, and resolve that

henceforth, having had much forgiven, you will love much, having been saved from great sin, you will tell it on earth, and tell it in heaven, and if you could, you would even wish to make hell itself resound with the wondrous story—

*“Tell it unto sinners tell,
I am, I am out of hell;”—*

“and what is more, I am on the road to heaven, for God’s ‘marvellous lovingkindness’ has been shown to me.”

So God’s lovingkindness may be seen as pardoning great sin, and next, it may be seen *as delivering from deep trouble*. I may be addressing some poor child of God who is sorely perplexed. These are very trying times, and we constantly meet with godly people who have a sincere desire to provide things honest in the sight of all men, but who do not find it easy to do so. Some very gracious people have got into a cleft stick, and how they will get out, they cannot imagine. If this is your case, dear friend, I expect you feel very much as John Fawcett’s hymn puts it—

*“My soul, with various tempests tested,
Her hopes o’erturn’d, her projects crossed,
Sees every day new straits attend,
And wonders where the scene will end.”*

Well now, if you are ever brought through all your troubles, it will be “marvellous lovingkindness” to you, will it not? Then go to God with the prayer, “Show me thy marvellous lovingkindness,” and He will do it. He will bring you up, and out, and through—not, perhaps, in the way you would like to come, but He will bring you out in the best way. “Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shall thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.”

Always expect the unexpected when you are dealing with God. Look to see, in God, and from God, what you never saw before, for the very things which will seem to unbelief to be utterly impossible, will be those which are most likely to happen when you are dealing with Him whose arm is omnipotent, and whose heart is faithful and true. God grant you grace, dear friend, thus to use the prayer of our text as the means of delivering you from deep trouble!

Here is another way to use it. I think you may pray it thus—at all events, I mean to do so, whether you will or not—“LORD, reveal Thy marvellous lovingkindness to me, *so as to give me high joys and ecstasies of delight.*”

I sometimes envy those good people who never go up and never go down, always keeping at one level, theirs must be a very pleasant experience indeed. Still, if ever I do get on the high horse, then I go up far beyond anything I can describe. If ever I do ride upon the clouds, then I do not envy the people who stay along the smooth road.

Oh, what deep depressions some of us have had! We have gone down to the very bottoms of the mountains, and the earth with her bars has seemed to be about us forever, but after just one glimpse of God’s everlasting love, we have been up there where the callow lightnings flashes, resting and trusting among the tempests, near to God’s right hand.

I think, nay, I am sure we may pray for this experience. Should not the preacher of the Word wish to know the fullness of love divine? Should not the teacher of the young long to learn all that he can concerning God’s infinite love? Though this is the love that passeth knowledge, should not every Christian wish to know all that is knowable of this great love of God? Then let us pray, “Shew thy marvellous lovingkindness.”

It was truly said, “Thou canst not see God’s face, and live,” but I have been inclined to say, “Then, let me see God’s face, and die.” John Welsh said, when God was flooding his soul with a sense of His wondrous love, “Hold, Lord, hold! I am but an earthen vessel, and Thou wilt break me.” If I had been

there, and I could have borne no more, I would have said, “Do not hold, Lord, break the poor earthen vessel, let it go all to pieces; but anyhow, let Thy love be revealed in me!”

Oh, that I might even die of this pleasurable pain of knowing too much of God, too much of the ineffable delight of fellowship with Him! Let us be very venturesome, beloved, and pray, “Shew thy marvellous lovingkindness.”

And when we have done that, I think we may put up this prayer for ourselves, *as to our own usefulness*. You want to do good, dear brother—dear sister. Well then, pray to God, “Show me Thy marvellous lovingkindness, O LORD! Use even such a feeble creature as I am. Let heaven, and earth, and hell itself, see that Thou canst save souls by poor ignorant men as well as by inspired apostles and learned doctors. LORD, in my chapel, show Thy marvellous lovingkindness. Crowd it with people, and bring many of them to Christ. In my class, LORD, show Thy marvellous lovingkindness. If there never was a Sunday school class in which all were saved, LORD, let it be done in mine. Make it a marvelous thing.”

A dear brother, who prayed at the prayer meeting before this service, kept on pleading that God would bless me again as He had done before. I liked that prayer, it was as if the friend meant to say to the Lord, “Whatever You did in years gone by, do the same over again. If ever it was a marvelous thing to see how the people thronged to hear the Word, Lord, make it more marvelous still.”

I recollect when some people called our early success “a nine days’ wonder.” Well, well, well, it has been a good long nine days, anyhow. But oh, that we might have another nine days like it—just such another nine days! May God be pleased to send us as many conversions as we had at the first—ay, and I shall add, and ten times as many!

And if ever there have been revivals in the church of God that have been really marvelous, brothers and sisters, let us take up the cry, “LORD, show Thy marvellous lovingkindness again. Send us another Whitefield, and another Wesley, if such will be the kind of men that will bless the world. Send us another Luther, another Calvin, another Zwingli, if such be the men that will bless the world. Lord, send us another Augustine, or another Jerome, if such be the men by whom You will bless the world. But in some way or other, Lord, show us Thy marvellous lovingkindness.”

“Oh, but!” some would say, “we do not want any excitement. That is an awful thing, you know—anything like excitement.” And then, perhaps they add, “We have heard so much of what has been done in previous revivals. It has all ended in smoke, and therefore we really dread the repetition of such an experience.” Well then, brother, you go home, and pray, “Lord, show me Thy moderate lovingkindness.” When you are on your knees tonight, pray, “Lord, save half-a-dozen souls here and there—

*“We are a garden wall’d around,
Chosen and made peculiar ground;
A little spot enclosed by grace
Out of the world’s wide wilderness;”—*

“Lord, make it yet smaller, screw us up tighter still, to the glory of Your blessed name!” I don’t think any of you can pray that prayer, you shall if you like, but for my part, I mean to pray, and I hope many of you will join me in it, and may God hear us! “Show us Thy marvellous lovingkindness.”

Oh, for some new miracle of mercy to be wrought in the earth! Oh, for some great thing to be done, such as was done of old! Shall it be so, or not? On this promise it shall depend, “Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.” But if our mouths be not open, we cannot expect to get the blessing, “According to your faith be it unto you.” The Lord grant that our faith may expect to see His “marvellous lovingkindness” displayed yet more and more! Amen and Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:**PSALM 17**

Verse 1. *Hear the right, O LORD, attend unto my cry, give ear unto my prayer, that goeth not out of feigned lips.*

Good men are often slandered and misunderstood, and at such times, the first verse of this psalm will well fit their lips, “Hear the right, O LORD.” And at all times, it is a great blessing when a suppliant can say to God, “Give ear unto my prayer, that goeth not out of feigned lips.” It must be a dreadful thing to pray with lips that do not speak the truth. When men’s thoughts are far away from their prayers, and they are muttering pious words but their heart is absent, what a mockery it must be in the sight of God! A dead prayer—who will own it? It is like the child that was overlaid in the days of Solomon, which neither of the two mothers would own to be hers. Beware of dead prayers. You may dress them up as finely as you like, but if there is no life in them, what good are they?

2. *Let my sentence come forth from thy presence; let thine eyes behold the things that are equal.*

It is the appeal of a slandered man to the highest court, he takes his case into the Court of King’s Bench, and asks God Himself to give the verdict concerning what he had done. It is a good case that will bear to be so investigated.

3. *Thou hast proved mine heart; thou hast visited me in the night; thou hast tried me, and shall find nothing; I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress.*

Happy is the man who is not afraid for God to come to him suddenly in the night, or to pounce upon him, as it were, at any hour of the day, for whenever He comes, He will find His servant so acting that he will not mind who examines his conduct. He is keeping his lip, purposing that it shall not transgress God’s law, and he is ruling his whole body in like manner. Only the grace of God can enable us to do this.

4. *Concerning the works of men, by the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer.*

Notice that verse, young man! There is much needed teaching there for you. There are many “paths of the destroyer” in this wicked city of London, and all over the world, and it is only by taking heed to our ways, according to God’s Word, that we can hope to escape from them. How pleasant those “paths of the destroyer” often appear to be! How smooth and how alluring they are! All sorts of supposed delicacies and beauties will tempt you to go that way, and the foolish heart readily inclines to these indulgences, but happy is the man whose judgment is enlightened by God’s Word so that he avoids it, and passes by “the paths of the destroyer.”

5. *Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.*

“I know that I am in Thy way, but O LORD, hold me up! I am like a horse that needs a careful driver else I shall trip, and fall, in rough places or in smooth. ‘Hold up my goings in thy paths,’ for I may fall even there. There are the sins of my holy things, so ‘hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.’”

6-12. *I have called upon thee, for thou wilt hear me, O God: incline thine ear unto me, and hear my speech. Shew thy marvellous lovingkindness, O thou that savest by thy right hand them who put their trust in thee from those that rise up against them. Keep me as the apple of thy eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings, from the wicked that oppress me, from my deadly enemies, who compass me about. They are enclosed in their own fat: with their mouth they speak proudly. They have now compassed us in our steps: they have set their eyes bowing down to the earth; like as a lion that is greedy of his prey, and as it were a young lion lurking in secret places.*

Many godly men have such cruel enemies as David had, so they will do well to pray as he did—

13-15. *Arise, O LORD, disappoint him, cast him down: deliver my soul from the wicked, which is thy sword: from men which are thy hand, O LORD, from men of the world, which have their portion in this*

life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hidden treasure: they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes. As for me,—

“What do I possess? What is my portion? Am I full of substance, like the men of the world, or have I little of this world’s wealth? It is of small consequence, for ‘as for me,’”—

15. *I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.*

That is our portion. God grant that we may prize it more and more! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—196, 18 (VERSION 2), 719

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